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THEATER SECURITY COOPERATION IN OCEANIA FOR THE 21st CENTURY

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Paper Abstract

This paper examines how theater security cooperation combined with unmanned aerial vehicles can provide a framework to combat some of the challenges that PACOM faces in the littorals of the Pacific Ocean. While the United States generally stands in a position of power within that region, the countries of Oceania are relatively powerless, and in most instances, they are ill equipped to provide the necessary management and security of their oceanic resources without outside help. These challenges can be addressed through strong U.S. relationships with the Pacific Island countries in order to create stable partners that align regional security objectives with those of the United States. This paper submits that by strengthening partnerships through UAV technology, there will be a peripheral effect that enhances regional enforcement of laws and enhances the collective regional maritime domain awareness picture. This paper also submits that an increased level of theater security cooperation, using the lure of UAVs, will align Oceania's interests with those of the United States vice China.

Introduction

The situation in Oceania¹ is dire. As the tiny island nations of the Pacific struggle to meet the demands of their societies, they combat rampant overfishing and transnational crime. These countries are completely reliant on the sea. The ocean provides the sustenance and the revenue that fuels their economies, but with the global fish stocks dwindling, the stakes are high. However, there is more at stake in the vastness of the Pacific Ocean than just fish, because the economies and national security interests of the Pacific Island Countries (PIC) and the United States are often intertwined. While the United States generally stands in a position of power, the PIC are generally powerless. In most instances, they are ill equipped to provide the necessary management of their oceanic resources without outside help. So they look for partners wherever they can find them, near or far.

In January 2012, President Obama declared that as we end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States “will focus on a broader range of challenges and opportunities, including the security and prosperity of the Asia Pacific” when he presented *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*.² In Oceania, the challenges that the President alludes to range from protecting natural resources, to tracking nefarious criminal activity that could affect the national security of the United States and could even be interpreted to mean curtailing Chinese expansionism out past the littorals of the Asian mainland. How can the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) meet these challenges?

¹ For the purposes of this paper, Oceania refers to the small island nations that collectively make up the South Pacific regions of Micronesia (Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Wake, Guam, Marianas, and the Marshalls), Melanesia (Papua New Guinea, Fiji and the Solomon's) and Polynesia (Tahiti, Tonga, Samoa, Tuvalu, Tokelau and Hawaii). In other contexts the term can include New Zealand, often Australia, & sometimes the Malay Archipelago, accessed 11 April 2012, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/oceania>.

² U.S. President, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington, DC: White House, January 2012).

The challenges that PACOM faces in Oceania can be addressed through strong relationships with the PIC in order to create stable partners that align regional security objectives with those of the United States. PACOM does this through its Theater Security Cooperation plan. According to the U.S. Navy's Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) Handbook, "[t]heater security cooperation is a mission that consists of the set of military activities undertaken with other nations to build relationships and contribute to strategic theater objectives. Theater security cooperation is not an event."³ These activities are intended to shape the operational environment during peacetime to "accomplish three main objectives: promote specific U.S. security interests, develop allied and friendly military capabilities and multinational operations, and provide U.S. forces with peacetime and contingency access to a host nation."⁴ Theater security cooperation can provide the framework to combat some of these challenges while furthering longtime partnerships within the region.

Furthermore, the use of advanced technologies, such as unmanned aerial vehicles, can enhance security cooperation with nations that are both inherently dependent on the Pacific Ocean for their very survival and also susceptible to the fiscal influence of China. Therefore, this paper submits that a reallocation of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) to PACOM would increase theater security cooperation opportunities in the Asia-Pacific thereby enhancing enforcement of laws and treaties, enhancing maritime domain awareness (MDA), and preventing Chinese encroachment in Oceania.

³ U.S. Navy, *Tactical Commanders Handbook for Theater Security Cooperation* (Norfolk, VA: Navy Warfare Development Command, 2009), 1:3.

⁴ Ibid, 1:2.

Background

The *National Strategy for Maritime Security* (NSMS) states that “[t]he safety and economic security of the United States depend in substantial part upon the secure use of the world’s oceans...Toward that end, the United States must take full advantage of strengthened alliances and other international cooperative arrangements, innovations in the use of law enforcement personnel and military forces, advances in technology, and strengthened intelligence collection, analysis, and dissemination.”⁵ The President’s Asia Pacific first policy coupled with the NSMS guidance provides a definitive direction for operational commanders and guides their ability to establish force requirements in a given theater. However, the vastness of the Pacific makes it challenging for even the cleverest operational commander to effectively plan, move and maneuver forces within the AOR.

Balancing Factors Space, Force & Time in the Pacific

Dr. Milan Vego describes the importance of balancing space, time, and force in his seminal work, *Joint Operational Warfare*, where he says “The art of warfare is to obtain and maintain freedom of action-the ability to carry out critically important, multiple, and diverse decisions to accomplish assigned military objectives. One’s freedom of action is achieved primarily by properly balancing the factors of space, time, and forces.”⁶ The enormity of the Pacific Ocean is foreboding, all 64 million square miles of it. The PACOM area of responsibility (AOR) covers about half the surface of the world and includes roughly 60% of the earth’s population. Within this expanse of water, thirty-six nations make up the Asia-

⁵ U.S. President, *National Strategy for Maritime Security* (Washington, DC: White House, September 2005), 1.

⁶ Milan Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare, Theory and Practice* (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, 2009), III-3.

Pacific region with over one third of those countries being small Pacific Island countries.⁷

Managing such an immense space creates a difficult challenge and requires that the operational commander take the necessary steps to leverage the allocation of assets as well as the time necessary to deploy those assets.

In an austere budget reality, such as the one in which the United States currently finds itself, factor force becomes difficult to manage, especially during a peacetime environment. In the Pacific, this task is magnified because the space is so large. It would take a massive number of assets to completely control it. Additionally, there are relatively few geographic locations to base assets. This means that the operational commander is generally limited to the status quo with respect to balancing factor force and factor space. “The struggle for the factor of time starts in peacetime,”⁸ says Vego, and the best way to counter the massive factor of space and the limited forces found in the Pacific is by stretching factor time with “accurate, timely and relevant intelligence.”⁹

Peacetime operations, like those in the realm of theater security cooperation, are an integral part of the operational commander’s ability to plan and shape the area of operations for future campaigns. Through the intelligence function, the operational commander can expand the time available to plan and prioritize a limited number of assets in order to deal with a given threat. Traditionally, the assets available to collect intelligence in the maritime environment were in the form of ships and manned maritime patrol aircraft (MPA). The ships, of course, are slow and can only collect intelligence from a relatively small area. The MPA are limited by their endurance and operating costs. However, advances in technology

⁷ U.S. Pacific Command, “About U.S. Pacific Command, PACOM Facts...,” accessed 2 April 2012, http://www.pacom.mil/web/Site_Pages/USPACOM/Facts.shtml.

⁸ Milan Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare, Theory and Practice* (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, 2009), III-19.

⁹ Ibid, VIII-25.

have seen the UAV flourish, and there is a potential to increase intelligence collection opportunities while supporting theater security cooperation in Oceania.

The Unmanned Aerial Vehicle

The notion of the unmanned aerial vehicle was around before the Wright brothers took to the skies in the early twentieth century.¹⁰ From the employment of balloons loaded with bombs dropped deep into enemy encampments during the American Civil War, to the delivery of precision weapons from sophisticated unmanned aircraft in Iraq and Afghanistan, UAVs have played a role in operational art.¹¹ Simply stated, UAVs increase the combat potential of a given force because they increase the commander's situational awareness of the operational environment. Using UAVs to improve theater security cooperation makes sense because they would enhance maritime domain awareness, law enforcement and would directly contribute national priorities in the Pacific region. UAVs bring Intelligence, Surveillance, & Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities that feed data to decision makers so they can balance space and force with time, in an AOR that desperately needs it.

As the P-3C Orion nears the ends of its service life, the Navy is ushering a new era of maritime patrol capabilities that is referred to as the Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Force Family of Systems. This family of systems is made up of the outgoing P-3C, the new P-8A Poseidon, the EP-3 Aries and the Broad Area Maritime Surveillance Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (BAMS UAV). The BAMS UAV will be capable of "persistent ISR with worldwide access" that can continuously survey the open ocean and littorals of Oceania up to 3000

¹⁰ Thomas P. Ehrhard, "Air Force UAVs: The Secret History," *Mitchell Institute Press*, July 2010, 2, accessed 30 April 2012, http://www.afa.org/mitchell/reports/MS_UAV_0710.pdf.

¹¹ Jim Garamone, "From U.S. Civil War to Afghanistan: A Short History of UAVs," *American Forces Press Service*, 16 April 2002, accessed 30 April 2012, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=44164>.

miles from point of launch.¹² This “Family of Systems model” will be able to guide the implementation of future UAV technologies through the support of an established community.¹³ While the P-8A Poseidon will not be operational in the Pacific until December of 2013 and the BAMS still in development, there is an opportunity to use the existing UAV inventory of the United States for nontraditional missions.

Using UAVs for nontraditional missions in the Pacific is not without precedent. PACOM is currently operating a Global Hawk with success in the region. During a press center briefing on Asia-Pacific, Admiral Willard, the PACOM Commander, said that “Global Hawk was a key factor in providing imagery and assistance to us and to the Japanese with regard to the status [after the 2011 tsunami] there. So Global Hawk is flying, and we are continuing to test its capabilities in the region, and it's serving us very well.”¹⁴

One of the challenges associated with operating UAVs within the national air space of the United States is that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not quite figured out how to integrate these types of platforms into the national air traffic system thereby creating a difficult operating environment requiring a myriad of certifications.¹⁵ While this challenge is stifling in the domestic arena, the Pacific AOR offers an excellent space to operate UAVs because the air space is not governed by FAA regulations. This space offers the UAV community an superb opportunity to hone their tactical skills. Aircraft in the upper altitudes of international airspace are only subjected to the rules of the International Civil

¹² U.S. Navy, *Naval Aviation Vision 2020* (San Diego, CA: Commander Naval Air Forces), 50.

¹³ Todd Copeland, “MEET THE Family,” *United States Naval Institute. Proceedings* 136, no. 9 (2010): 36-39, accessed 2 April 2012, Pro Quest.

¹⁴ “Foreign Press Center Briefing on Asia-Pacific U.S. Military Overview,” *Targeted News Service* (27 January 2012), accessed 29 March 2012, Pro Quest.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Transportation, *Fact Sheet: Unmanned Aerial Systems* (Washington, DC: Federal Aviation Administration, 2010), accessed 30 April 2012, http://www.faa.gov/news/fact_sheets/news_story.cfm?newsid=6287.

Aviation Organization (ICAO) and those rules do not strictly apply to state¹⁶ aircraft.

Additionally, the airspace below 5000 feet is completely uncontrolled and open to unrestricted use.

This UAV capability has already paid huge dividends in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan by conducting precision strikes that prevent direct troop engagements and wide area surveillance that keeps the command and control structure informed. Today, those conflicts are concluding, and the prospect of using the same UAV capabilities and assets in the Pacific region of Oceania will greatly enhance theater security cooperation, thus creating an operational environment that supports national and theater level strategic policies.

Enhancing TSC through Law Enforcement Operations with UAVs

The battlefield in the law enforcement aspect of theater security cooperation in Oceania is the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ)¹⁷ of the United States and the Pacific Island Nations. The Pacific is the wild west of the global fishing industry. It has become highly competitive in part due to the reduction of worldwide fish stocks, but also due to increased operating costs and environmental concerns. According to the *State of the World's Fisheries and Aquaculture* report, “about 32 percent of world fish stocks are estimated to be overexploited, depleted or recovering and need to be urgently rebuilt.”¹⁸ Couple that statistic with a recent study that found the illegal fishing industry to be worth \$23.5 billion per year and the outlook for recovery is grim.¹⁹ In this realm, UAVs can achieve a decisive advantage.

¹⁶ Aircraft owned/operated by the United States government, (i.e. military aircraft.)

¹⁷ Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) are areas adjacent to the territorial sea of a coastal state that typically extend 200 nautical miles seaward and grant sovereign rights to that state for the purposes of exploiting natural resources. United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea Part V, accessed 2 April 2012, http://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/part5.htm.

¹⁸ Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, accessed 3 April 2012, <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/50260/icode>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

The United States has over two million square miles of EEZs to regulate in the Pacific. This represents forty percent of the nationally claimed economic zones and the included fishery resources. Therefore, the United States has a vested interest in the protection of the fish stocks within these waters. While the U.S. Coast Guard is the lead maritime law enforcement agency, the forces required protect that space are often required to abandon critical law enforcement endeavors in order to prosecute other missions. Additionally, only the largest Coast Guard cutters and aircraft are capable of making the journey to the remote EEZs, leaving many areas unpatrolled and susceptible to illegal activity.²⁰

The same is true for the small island nations in the Pacific that make up Oceania. The big difference is that those countries do not have the assets to protect their resources. The nations that are commonly referred to as Micronesia: Palau, The Republic of the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, and the Federated States of Micronesia are faced with a combined 3.5 million square miles of EEZs to monitor and protect, with very little means.²¹ Any degradation of the PIC fishery resources, will also adversely affect the fishery resources of the United States because in many cases they share boundaries.

UAVs can bridge the surveillance gap and provide law enforcement opportunities for the United States to not only monitor its own EEZs, but also monitor those of its PIC partners thus increasing theater security cooperation. The increased intelligence data stream will help the operational commander allocate threat appropriate assets in order to enforce international laws and treaties, without having to divert assets that may sacrifice other missions. Theater security cooperation in the form of this law enforcement assistance with these island nations

²⁰ Insights are based on the personal experience of the author as a U.S. Coast Guard maritime patrol aircraft pilot with extensive experience operating in the various regions of Oceania conducting law enforcement missions from July 2007 to July 2011.

²¹ University of British Columbia, Sea Around Us Project, Fisheries, Ecosystems, Biodiversity database, accessed 3 April 2012, <http://seararoundus.org/eez>.

is a win-win for all parties because it gives those countries the opportunity to prevent the pillaging of their natural resources, while it also protects the U.S. interests.

Enhancing TSC through Maritime Domain Awareness Operations with UAVs

The 2005 *National Plan to Achieve Maritime Domain Awareness [MDA]* defines MDA as “the effective understanding of anything associated with the maritime domain that could impact the security, safety, economy, or environment of the United States.”²² The security and defense of the homeland in the maritime domain are strengthened through the unity of effort of the Maritime Operational Threat Response (MOTR) plan, but in order to activate that response plan, there needs to be an awareness of the maritime domain and the associated threats. This is challenging in the vastness of the Pacific. While the Pacific is too large to conduct continuous patrols with maritime aircraft, using UAVs to patrol the littorals and the EEZs that surround them creates a more manageable data collection environment. These waters are also the perfect hiding place for criminal activity, and therefore will be a critical point in the battle for knowledge on the ocean.

Deep-water fishing is strenuous work and requires relatively small vessels to be at sea for six to twelve months. Crews are often poorly paid and trained, which makes them susceptible to criminal activity. Tony Martin, of the Regional Maritime Programme operating from Fiji, noted that “In the Pacific region, the principle DWFNs [Distant Water Fishing Nations] are Taiwan, Japan, Republic of Korea and the People’s Republic of China [PRC]...[for those countries] Profitable fishing is thought to be secondary to their primary purpose of establishing a presence in the region.” Additionally, many of these vessels operate under flags of convenience, often without a “genuine link” with the country of registration.

²² U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *National Plan to Achieve Maritime Domain Awareness for the National Strategy for Maritime Security* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Homeland Security, October 2005).

This portends that these types of vessels may be engaged in a “range of non-compliances,” that includes safety and security concerns. There are “fertile grounds for resentment and dissent,” suggesting the larger context of maritime security.²³

A Center for Strategic Studies report concluded that the prospect for transnational crime and illegal fishing is trending up, but there is some potential to change the outcome. The study noted the “probable growth of IUU [illegal, unregulated, unreported] fishing should be of concern...because lack of capability in maritime law enforcement affects prospects for improvements in maritime domain awareness.”²⁴ This further highlights the ongoing problems and connotes the possible need for more U.S. surveillance activity in the region.

In fact, a series of interviews conducted by Mr. Martin within the regional fishing industry, concluded that all of the interviewees “were of a like mind- that foreign fishing vessels are to a greater or lesser extent involved in illegal activities or are instrumental in facilitating criminal activities.” These activities include illegal fishing in the EEZs, human trafficking, weapons/drug smuggling, money laundering and prostitution.²⁵

With this characterization of the situation, theater security cooperation efforts in Oceania become increasingly important. While there is an overall shortage of available assets to accomplish this MDA mission, UAVs can be leveraged to fill the gap. Using UAVs for theater security cooperation is already being accomplished. The USS SIMPSON is operating an unmanned Fire Scout helicopter in support of Naval Forces Africa operations in an

²³ Tony Martin, “Report on Foreign Fishing Vessels Security Issues in the Pacific Islands Region,” Regional Maritime Programme, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, September 2005, Updated 4 November 2005, 35-37, accessed 11 April 2012, <http://www.spc.int/coastfish/en/publications/digital-library.html>.

²⁴ Center for Strategic Studies, *Shaping Analysis for Oceania* (U) (Alexandria, VA: CNA Corporation, March 2008), 2 (Secret). Information extracted is unclassified.

²⁵ Tony Martin, “Report on Foreign Fishing Vessels Security Issues in the Pacific Islands Region,” Regional Maritime Programme, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, September 2005, Updated 4 November 2005, 35-37, accessed 11 April 2012, <http://www.spc.int/coastfish/en/publications/digital-library.html>.

international initiative that will increase maritime safety and security. In a previous deployment, Fire Scout was instrumental in gathering intelligence during counter-piracy operations. Captain Patrick Smith, the Commanding Officer of the USS SIMPSON, said that “Fire Scout greatly extends and improves the fleet's ability to perform intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions.”²⁶

The Fire Scout is just one example. There is genuine opportunity to feed the collective MDA information systems using UAV assets. While UAVs can be instrumental in fulfilling the law enforcement and MDA elements of theater security, they can also help prevent Chinese expansion into the waters nearest U.S. EEZs in the Pacific.

Enhancing TSC through stemming Chinese Expansionism with UAVs

As noted earlier, profitable fishing is often a secondary mission for some of the DWFN vessels. There is a sense that many of these vessels, particularly the vessels from the PRC, have ulterior motives that are subsidized by their government.²⁷ China is also economically expanding into the Pacific. This expansionism in the Pacific, specifically Oceania, is happening for two reasons: access and influence. Through the law enforcement and awareness efforts of UAVs, there will be the tangential effect of thwarting Chinese expansionism. Increased theater security cooperation with the PIC countries will align their interests with those of the United States instead of China.

First, China needs access to resources in order to feed and fuel the largest population in the world. Oceania has a wealth of resources including fish, mineral deposits, and natural gas. China is investing heavily in the region through state owned corporations. For example,

²⁶ U.S. Navy, "USS Simpson and Fire Scout Set Sail for Africa," *Defense Talk*, 23 January 2012, accessed 8 April 2012, <http://www.defencetalk.com/uss-simpson-and-fire-scout-set-sail-for-africa-39943>.

²⁷ Tony Martin, "Report on Foreign Fishing Vessels Security Issues in the Pacific Islands Region," Regional Maritime Programme, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, September 2005, Updated 4 November 2005, 35-37, accessed 11 April 2012, <http://www.spc.int/coastfish/en/publications/digital-library.html>.

a Chinese metallurgical corporation established a partnership with the Ramu mine in Papua New Guinea (PNG) worth \$1.4US billion. “One notable characteristic of the Ramu project is the propensity of both the Chinese and PNG governments to view it as a state-to-state matter.”²⁸ This does not suggest the capitalist economic development of western societies, but rather a deliberate attempt to gain access to natural gas reserves, therefore expanding the Chinese government’s influence into Oceania.

Second, China is in a proxy war with Taiwan for diplomatic recognition. Of the twenty-four countries in the United Nations that recognize the sovereignty of Taiwan, six of them are Pacific Island Countries: Kiribati, The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Nauru, Palau, Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu.²⁹ The Australian based Lowy Institute for International Policy stated that “competition between the PRC and Taiwan for diplomatic recognition has, on occasion, appeared to take on the characteristics of a bidding war, conducted mainly through bilateral ‘aid’ payments.”³⁰ According to the statistics, twenty-five percent of Taiwan’s worldwide backing comes directly from the Oceania region. So why does Chinese expansion matter to the theater security cooperation interests of PACOM?

If the Chinese are able to eventually win the hearts, minds and recognition of the PIC in Oceania, PACOM will risk losing alliances that are crucial to regional security. This is important because China will have an opportunity to garner more influence if there is a perception that the United States is apathetic to the needs of Oceania.³¹ Over the last twenty

²⁸ Graeme Smith, “Chinese Interests in the Pacific Nations: mining ventures in PNG,” *East Asia Forum*, 19 May 2011, accessed 11 April 2012, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2011/05/19/chinese-interests-in-pacific-nations-mining-ventures-in-png>.

²⁹ Center for Strategic Studies, *Shaping Analysis for Oceania* (U) (Alexandria, VA: CNA Corporation, March 2008), (Secret). Information extracted is unclassified.

³⁰ Fergus Hanson, “The Dragon Looks South,” *Lowy Institute for International Policy*, April 2008, 5-6, accessed 10 April 2012, <http://www.lowyinstitute.org>.

³¹ Center for Strategic Studies, *Shaping Analysis for Oceania* (U) (Alexandria, VA: CNA Corporation, March 2008), 3 (Secret). Information extracted is unclassified.

years, the U.S. presence in Oceania has declined in the forms of the withdrawal of the Peace Corps, closing the embassy in the Solomon Islands, and removing the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) infrastructure that was in place.³² This decline has created an economic void. Spending more time in the littorals and the EEZs of Oceania will reap benefits in the future. UAVs can deliver that time.

The Center for Strategic Studies again notes that the “deployment of a major, highly visible, resource to the region helps create the impressions of U.S. interest in the region.”³³ Operating UAVs in Oceania will provide the PIC countries an alternative to Chinese economic offerings because the PIC will be able to take part in their own security through shared intelligence. This increased measure of security against IUU fishing and transnational crime will in turn create more stable economies and less reliance on Chinese investment and aid.

Counter Argument

Most Americans probably cannot find Oceania on a map, but PACOM is already conducting theater security cooperation in the region with some success. While UAVs offer some technically advanced surveillance capabilities, some critics would argue that they are not necessary in PACOM’s TSC mission because there is already a robust international partnership program in place and that UAVs are not necessary. For instance, the Quadrennial Defense Cooperation Talks (a.k.a. Quads), is “a collaboration between France, the United States [via the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)], Australia, and New Zealand to ensure a prosperous, secure, and stable Pacific. The Quads focus on maritime safety and security

³² Ibid, 67.

³³ Ibid, 4.

issues such as fisheries enforcement and deterrence of transnational crime.”³⁴ This program leverages the assets of these four countries in order to take advantage of mutual capabilities and share intelligence that might benefit the collective.

Another example of TSC currently happening in Oceania is through the body of agreements in place with other Pacific nations known as shiprider agreements. This type of agreement “allows the service [USCG] to engage in bilateral or joint maritime surveillance operations in which a visiting law enforcement officer rides aboard a Coast Guard vessel or aircraft and, essentially, uses those assets as a platform for enforcing their own nation’s EEZ.”³⁵ These agreements include eight PIC countries including Tonga, Palau, RMI, Kiribati, FSM, Cook Islands, Nauru, and Tuvalu.³⁶ This type of cooperation makes it possible for law enforcement and maritime domain awareness activities to take place without the use of UAVs.

The shiprider program and the Quads are good examples of TSC in Oceania, but they still do not get around the general lack of available assets that can be devoted to a region that immense. A report citing Australian defense planners stated that “maritime patrol aircraft support is the most important regional contribution.”³⁷ If the MPA are not available, UAVs might be the next best solution.

Other critics could say that UAVs would be an unnecessary cost because PACOM and the U.S. Coast Guard already have maritime patrol aircraft that can assist in theater security cooperation ventures. UAVs do not necessarily offer a cost per hour savings over

³⁴ Craig Collins, “Coast Guard District 14 – Securing the Vast Pacific,” *Defense Media Network*, 9 January 2012, accessed 11 April 2012, <http://www.defensemianetwork.com/stories/coast-guard-district-14-%E2%80%93-securing-the-vast-pacific/>.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Coincidentally, these are largely the same nations that diplomatically recognize Taiwan instead of China.

³⁷ Center for Strategic Studies, *Shaping Analysis for Oceania* (U) (Alexandria, VA: CNA Corporation, March 2008), 5 (Secret). Information extracted is unclassified.

traditional fixed and rotary wing platforms. “According to the CBP [Customs and Border Patrol] Inspector General, the costs of operating a UAV are more than double the costs of operating a manned aircraft.”³⁸ The operating costs are higher than manned aircraft because UAVs typically require extensive logistic support, maintenance and operator training.

While it may be true that UAVs cost more to operate, they generally enjoy a much lower acquisition cost than manned aircraft. The Congressional Research Service notes that a Shadow rotary-wing UAV costs around \$350,000 while an equivalent H-60 Blackhawk helicopter costs about \$8.6M. Similarly, a Predator UAV can be purchased for about \$4.5M while the manned equivalent, a P-3 fixed-wing aircraft, costs \$36M.³⁹ This savings in initial acquisition costs can be parlayed into many years’ worth of operating costs. Additionally, U.S. Air Force Secretary Michael Donley testified before Congress that the service is planning to move eighteen RQ-4 Global Hawks to storage because they are no longer needed.⁴⁰ UAVs offer a solution that has already been purchased.

Recommendations and Conclusion

As the war in Afghanistan draws to a close, the U.S. military should be looking for nontraditional ways to use some of its assets. In addition to the initial savings that UAVs enjoy over manned aircraft, there is capacity within the current Department of Defense to reallocate already purchased UAV platforms in support of the theater security cooperation mission. It is not suggested that the PIC would have the resources or capacity to operate these systems autonomously. Instead, it is recommended that the United States leverage current

³⁸ Chad Haddal and Jeremiah Gertler, “Homeland Security: Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and Border Surveillance,” *Congressional Research Service*, 8 July 2010, 4, accessed 11 April 2012, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/homsec/RS21698.pdf>.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Brian Everstine, “USAF Leaders Defend Global Hawk Cuts at Hearing,” *Defense News*, 6 March 2012, accessed 11 April 2012, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20120306/DEFREG02/303060009/USAF-Leaders-Defend-Global-Hawk-Cuts-Hearing?odyssey=tab|topnews|text|FRONTPAGE>.

systems to create an environment that acquires and shares the intelligence with the PIC in order to support law enforcement and maritime domain awareness efforts. Additionally, these strengthened partnerships will help tip the scale of influence away from China and in favor of the United States.

The Center for Strategic Studies concluded that it is important to “continue partnership operations [in Oceania]” and “provide surveillance support for fisheries operations.”⁴¹ This support encourages PIC to conduct operations and share information with the United States. “They complement U.S. defense responsibilities and can contribute to the regional maritime domain awareness.”⁴² Using UAVs for theater security cooperation in Oceania makes sense because traditional maritime patrol assets are preparing for other potential threats in the Pacific and not necessarily available for the routine work of MDA and law enforcement. These platforms have the ability to transform the operational area by leveraging the factor of time against the problems created by a reduced force with a huge space, and the best part is the United States already owns them.

⁴¹ Center for Strategic Studies, *Shaping Analysis for Oceania* (U) (Alexandria, VA: CNA Corporation, March 2008), 4-5 (Secret). Information extracted is unclassified.

⁴² Ibid, 5.

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